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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000315

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KINSHASA PASS TO BRAZZAVILLE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IV](#)

SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: VISIT OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD

REF: A. ABIDJAN 179

[1](#)B. ABIDJAN 228

Classified By: POL/ECON Jin Wojtasiewicz, reasons 1-4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Deputy Assistant Secretary Linda Thomas-Greenfield made a very productive visit to Abidjan March 15-17. She met with leaders and top officials from all parts of the political spectrum. Her Ivoirian interlocutors praised highly the intensity of U.S. engagement here, and appealed for even more support for their peace process. DAS Thomas-Greenfield reaffirmed U.S. commitment to facilitating that process in any way we can, while underscoring that ultimately it is up to the Ivoirians to lead themselves to peace. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, made a very productive visit to Abidjan March 15-17. She met with Prime Minister Banny; Guillaume Soro, Secretary General of the rebel New Forces (FN); Sarata Ottro-Toure, President Gbagbo's Deputy Cabinet Director; Mambe Beugre, Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission; a group of leaders of political opposition parties; Largato Ouattara, Secretary General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Charles Koffi Diby, Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance. She also attended a dinner hosted by the Ambassador with Ministers of Foreign Affairs from South Africa and the Republic of the Congo, the French Minister of Cooperation, and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General.

[1](#)3. (C) All of her Ivoirian interlocutors had high praise for the intensity of U.S. engagement in Cote d'Ivoire, citing in particular the Ambassador's recent trip to the rebel-controlled north (ref A) as an important contribution toward the reunification of the country. The Ivoirians appealed for the United States and the rest of the international community to remain engaged in the Ivoirian peace process. DAS Thomas-Greenfield reaffirmed U.S. support for peace and reconciliation for all of Cote d'Ivoire. She noted the importance of resolving Cote d'Ivoire's political crisis for the stability of all of West Africa. She stressed that the United States does not take sides, and urged Ivoirians to understand that ultimately it is up to them to resolve their crisis -- the international community can and will help, but we cannot impose peace in Cote d'Ivoire.

[1](#)4. (C) Her meeting with rebel leader Guillaume Soro was a historic one, the first time a senior official from Washington has met with him. Soro was accompanied by his military chief of staff and three FN ministers from Prime Minister Banny's new government. Soro stressed the importance for the FN of completing the process of issuing identification cards to all Ivoirians. He noted that this

was the reason why the FN took up arms in the first place, to claim the right of all Ivoirians to be given a document affirming their citizenship. He also underscored the importance of making jobs available for FN soldiers after they disarm. Soro was upbeat about the recent resumption of direct talks between the Armed Forces of Cote d'Ivoire (FANCI) and the Armed Forces of the FN (FAFN), especially about the prospects for creating a combined joint staff as a first step toward integrating and restructuring the two armed forces.

15. (C) DAS Thomas-Greenfield's meeting with the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) was also the first time any U.S. official has met with the new CEI leadership. Chairman Beugre was accompanied by eight of the other eleven members of the new CEI Executive Bureau, representing all parts of the political spectrum. Each one spoke, one-by-one pledging to work in a spirit of consensus to bring about fair, transparent and democratic elections, and appealing for the United States and the international community to help them find the necessary resources to do so. This meeting received extensive coverage on Ivoirian television and in the local newspapers.

16. (C) Presidential Advisor Ottor-Toure, like Soro, was upbeat about prospects for peace, and about the recently resumed military-to-military dialogue including discussion of the creation of a combined joint command. She, like all of DAS Thomas-Greenfield's other Ivoirian interlocutors, hailed the Ambassador's recent trip to the North as an important step toward healing the country's wounds. She noted that at a recent Cabinet meeting, Soro had invited President Gbagbo to visit the rebel capital of Bouake and Gbagbo said he would, when he can call upon all Ivoirians who fled after the

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2002 rebellion to return to their homes. Ottor-Toure confirmed that the National Assembly, whose mandate expired December 16 but was extended by President Gbagbo, would not take up any controversial legislation but only routine matters like the 2006 budget.

17. (C) The leaders of political opposition parties were encouraged by the February 28 summit of Ivoirian political leaders in Yamoussoukro (ref B), but were somewhat skeptical about President Gbagbo's real intentions and repeatedly drew attention to the fact that nothing has been done to dismantle the pro-Gbagbo militias. They expressed support for the idea of a combined joint command between the FANCI and the FAFN. They appealed for the United States and the international community to help facilitate the process of issuing identification cards and to make sure the upcoming elections are truly free, fair and democratic. They also called for more troops for UNOCI, to support these efforts.

(C) Comment. DAS Thomas-Greenfield's visit encouraging all sides to move forward with the peace process and reaffirmed U.S. support for that process, while making clear that we can only be facilitators, the Ivoirians must lead themselves out of this crisis. The fact that she came here underscored U.S. commitment to facilitate the Ivoirian peace process in any way we can. End Comment.

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